The Fortune Hunter: A Tale of New York Society
Anna Cora Mowatt

Mowatt wrote The Fortune Hunter to be submitted to a contest held by the New World newspaper. (The novel won the $100 prize.) Contest rules dictated that the title of the work, that the setting had to be New York, and that the text had to be completed within six months. So, recycling a few characters from short stories written under the pen name “Helen Berkeley,” Mowatt quickly created a tale that started with two fashionable fellows in search of wealthy wives -- Brainard and Ellery. They, in turn, are pursued by the inexorable debt collector, Mr. Badger. Then the reader is introduced to the objects of the bachelors’ chase, the Clinton sisters. The elder sister, Rachel, has become so disgusted with this cynical game of fortune hunting that she has decided to renounce her claim to her portion of her father’s fortune to escape the mendacity of suitors like Brainard and Ellery. Ester, the melodramatic, Byron-quoting, younger sister (who is now trying to go by the name Estelle) is perfectly happy to play the game, as long as it is by the rules she sets. Love is no game to Miss Arria Walton, the penniless orphan ward of the Clinton’s father and best friend of the sisters, who is desperately in love with young Dr. Edgar Chadwick. Rapid twists and turns of fate and sudden reversals of fortune characterize the plot of this comic melodrama that is part Jane Austen, part Charles Dickens, but establishes a delightful Victorian Americana flavoring all of its own. - Summary by Kelly S. Taylor

Read by Kelly S. Taylor. Total running time: 07:29:04

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